

STATE TRAINING CONFERENCE FOR INTERVIEWERS^o
January 1947 Enumerative Survey

The success of the farm survey program of the Department of Agriculture depends primarily on how good a job the interviewer does (a) in locating the farms and interviewing the farm operators included in the sample and (b) how well he conducts the interviews. The responsibility for this highly important phase of the program rests on the statisticians of our 41 field offices. The three essential steps that will insure success are:

1. The selection of highly intelligent and responsible interviewers who know how to get along well with farm people.
2. The effective training of these interviewers for the job they are expected to do, and
3. Efficient supervision of their work of enumeration.

The three-day training school for interviewers is all too short a period to provide the necessary training. It must be carefully planned in advance in order to make the most effective use possible of the time available. If we are to avoid overwhelming the interviewer with the difficulty and complexity of the job the instruction must be one step at a time and in a logical sequence. In that way he will gain confidence in himself and be prepared to go out to do a good job.

Sound teaching methods include explanation, demonstration, and sufficient doing and practice under competent supervision to make sure that the employee knows what he is expected to do, how to do it effectively, and why he does it in the designated manner. Both the written and spoken word should be used in explanation. Spoken explanation, however, soon becomes boring and ineffectual and consequently should be brief, to the point and not continued any longer than necessary. Demonstration, interspersed with explanation is usually much more interesting and effective than explanation alone. Actually doing, with help when needed, is superior to demonstration. It is with these principles in mind that the three-day training program, outlined below, has been developed. It can, of course, be modified as you may find necessary, but with these basic principles of sound teaching in mind.

Before attempting to suggest a program of instruction, however, we need to agree on the objectives to be attained. They may be summarized as follows:

1. To provide each interviewer with a clear understanding of the importance of the statistical, fact finding, and interpretive work of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, historically beginning in 1862, currently, and for the future. This background is essential to a feeling of the worthwhileness of the job and its importance to American Agriculture.
2. To impress upon the interviewer his responsibility as an employee of the Department of Agriculture.
3. To provide a clear understanding of the Sample Survey Program of BAE in January 1947 and later; what it is, why it is needed, and the scientific validity of the methods used - a preselected representative sample of farm operators (a cross-section of all kinds of farms and farm operators) and

the interview type of schedule that has been carefully pretested. The sample survey gives dependable results providing the scientific rules are followed to the letter - that is, farm operators having their headquarters in the preselected sample segments are interviewed, the questions are asked as they appear on the schedule, and proper interviewing methods are followed.

4. To give each member of the class an idea of just what the interviewers job is, his job may be summarized as follows:
 - a. To represent the Department of Agriculture as an interviewer in obtaining facts and figures concerning farming operations and farm people from farm operators.
 - b. To locate the specified sample segments, identify the boundaries of these segments and the boundaries of the farms having land in these segments, determine and locate the headquarters of all such farms, and interview only those farm operators whose headquarters are located within the sample segment.
 - c. To become thoroughly familiar with the topics and questions in the schedule, and the instructions covering each, why the information covered by each topic is needed.
 - d. To follow sound interviewing methods in conducting the interview with the farm operator in order to obtain reliable and unbiased facts and figures.
 - e. To check the schedule for completeness, accuracy and consistencey before leaving the farm operator.
 - f. To learn and understand the methods to be followed and apply them intelligently and efficiently.
5. To train the interviewer in the skills necessary for the successful performance of his work such as:

Sampling:

- a. How to use maps and aerial photos in locating and identifying the sample segments and the farms therein whose operators are to be interviewed.
- b. How to determine farm headquarters.
- c. How to use the farm identification sheet to account for all tracts of land in each sample segment.
- d. How to use the Plantation Form if in the South.

The Schedule:

- e. Thorough knowledge of the topics and questions in the schedule,

their purpose, how the questions are interrelated and what information is expected from the farm operator!

Interviewing:

- f. How to conduct a successful interview with all kinds and classes of farmers found in the area.
 - (1) Meeting and establishing rapproch (a friendly feeling of cooperation) with the farm operator. In doing this it is essential to point out-
 - (a) That this is a government survey.
 - (b) The purpose of the survey.
 - (c) How the farmer happened to be chosen.
 - (d) That the information he gives will never be used to his disadvantage.
 - (2) Methods of introducing topics on the schedule and asking questions as they appear on the schedule. Use of leads and methods of "probing" to clarify responses and make sure that answers are based on the considered judgment of the farm operator. Avoid use of "leading" questions or comments that may bias the answer. Never argue with the farmer.
 - (3) Terminating the interview successfully in such a way that the interviewer will be welcome the next time he comes.

Other points:

- g. How to check the schedule for completeness, accuracy, and consistency before it is sent to the State Office.
- h. Instructions concerning "call back" segments and interviews.
- i. How to prepare and submit work records and expense accounts.

JUN 3 1948



First Day

Afternoon (cont'd)

Methods of probing to make sure that answers are based on the considered judgment of the farm operator. Avoidance of leading or directing questions or comments that may bias the answer. This general subject is discussed on pages 15 to 20 in the Instruction book.

3:30 - 3:45 Intermission

3:45 - 5:30 Continuation of the demonstration interview.

5:30 Adjournment.

(Inform the class that each member will be called upon to conduct an interview when the class meets in the morning.)

Second Day

Morning

8:30 - 10:15 Practice interview with one member of class serving as respondent. (If possible, get a farmer to serve as respondent.) Rotating the topics among members of the class with each recording the answers on his own schedule.

10:15 - 10:30 Intermission

10:30 - 12:30 Pair off the members of the class and have each pair conduct a practice interview.

12:30 Lunch

Afternoon

1:30 - 2:00 Group discussion on the schedule and methods of interviewing to clear up all questions.

2:00 - 5:30 Each member of the class will go to the field and obtain one interview with a farm operator and return to the classroom to discuss with the Supervisor the problems that are not clear in his mind. Because of the shortage of time available it will be necessary to have appointments arranged ahead of time for these practice interviews with farmers in the vicinity of the place where the training conference is held.

5:30 Adjournment

PROPOSED PROGRAM FOR STATE TRAINING CONFERENCES

First Day

Morning

- 8:30 - 9:00 Introductions all around, Work of the Department of Agriculture in the field of Agricultural Statistics. The Bureau of Agricultural Economics as a fact finding and fact interpreting agency. What Agricultural Statistics are published, how they are used, who uses them, and for what purposes. Re: The Statistical Program of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Dec. 1946-Pages 1 to 5, and 12 to 21.
- Interviewers responsibility as an employee of the Department of Agriculture.
- 9:00 - 9:30 The Enumerative Survey Program of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics--January, 1947, and later. What it is and why it is needed. The scientific validity of the methods used--a pre-selected representative sample and the interview type of schedule. Page 2 and 3 of the Interviewers Instructions. Re: The Statistical Program of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics-Pages 9 and 10, middle of page 16.
- 9:30 - 10:10 Presentation of the long schedule and interviewers instructions--individual topics and their purposes. (Page 22 of Instruction book for Interviewers) The questions, their sequence and inter-relationships, key points to watch, as given in the Interviewers Instruction Book under "Guide to the Questions" beginning on page 25.
- 10:10 - 10:20 Intermission
- 10:20 - 12:00 Continuation of 9:30 program.
- 12:00 - Noon Lunch

Afternoon

- 1:00 - 2:30 Demonstration interview conducted by the supervisor with each member of the class recording the data on his own schedule. Arrange to have either a farmer or member of the class serve as respondent. After each topic is completed, stop and discuss it with the class in terms of what is wanted, why it is wanted, and key points to watch in probing to get accurate answers, going over the instructions.
- 2:30 - 3:30 Interviewing methods: Mooting and establishing rapport with the farm operators. The four essential points to cover when the interviewer introduces himself to the farm operator. The drawing off of attitudes and feelings of the respondent.
- Methods of introducing topics and questions, use of leads in clarifying responses, use of probes in clarifying responses.

Third Day

Morning

- 8:30 - 10:15 Group discussion of interview experience of previous afternoon.
- 10:15 - 10:30 Intermission
- 10:30 - 11:30 Use of maps in locating and identifying sample segments to be enumerated. Determination of farm headquarters. Farm Identification Sheet. This subject is discussed on pages 4 to 10 of the instructions to interviewers ("The January Enumerative Survey of Agriculture").
- 11:30 Lunch

Afternoon

- 12:30 - 4:00 Field trip with individual members of the class directing the travel to a sample segment and identifying its boundaries. This should be done in rotation until all members of the class have had this experience under the general direction of the Supervisor, or Assistant Supervisor, in the car.
- 4:00 - 4:30 Discussion of problems that arise in connection with use of maps in locating and identifying sample segments to be enumerated, farm headquarters, and use of Farm Identification Sheet, found on pages 10 to 15 of the Instruction book.
- 4:30 - 5:30 Instructions on reporting time worked, mileage, expense accounts and "call backs". Recapitulation. Explanation of the example form CEF 196 included in the Training School Kit.
- 5:30 Adjournment
- If necessary, hold evening meeting to clarify instructions on farm identification and other points.

